

28<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Dear Families

It has been a very tough 4 weeks and not the start to the 2021 that any of us were hoping for. Collectively we are all exhausted. Yesterday Boris Johnson announced that schools *may* start opening more fully *from* 8<sup>th</sup> March. We can pray and hope that things improve to enable us to do this.

Many of you are aware that I have 3 of my own children aged 10, 8 and 3. During the week, my eldest two are set a huge amount of work, most of which we have to complete after 5pm. Currently every Friday I work from home on my day off and juggle this with home schooling, managing a lack of devices and intermittent wifi and entertaining/ educating a toddler. By Friday night, I am shattered and exhausted...and I am a trained, experienced teacher!

So... I am writing this letter from my heart, as a mother, from one parent to another. I know how you are feeling – home schooling is really tough! **You are all doing a FANTASTIC job. You are keeping your children safe and you are doing your BEST.** All of us have different circumstances and different worries and no one truly knows what goes on behind another family's door. **But the one thing we do have is each other.** The beautiful thing about our school is that we are one large family and family look after each other!

If all you can muster is reading a story, practising times tables/number bonds/phonics or going for a walk, **THAT'S OKAY, do what you can!** School will re-open at some point and we will work extremely hard to support children to catch up.

The past week we have received quite a few emails and phone messages where families are really struggling with home schooling, behaviour, feeling isolated, device/wifi issues and the mental health of either themselves or their children. From next week, we will be resuming our fortnightly phone calls to all families in the same way we did last year. You can always contact us on the telephone, through google classroom or through the school's website.

The government expects that children in KS2 (Years 3-6) have 4 hours a day and KS1 (Years 1 & 2) have 3 hours per day. **81% of survey respondents thought we set the right amount of work for our children.** 5% thought there wasn't enough and 14% thought there was too much.

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We have been asked why we don't do more **live sessions**. In some cases, the respondents have compared us with larger primary schools or secondary schools. There are extensive reasons why a 1 form entry school is excellent, but sadly the one big drawback is that we don't have the same level of staffing nor funding that larger schools have.

Currently we are averaging 68 children in school each day - just over 30% of our school (which is our covid-safe capacity) and this is one of the highest in the boroughs and above the national average. Many of the local high schools have under 40 children on site and the majority of staff are working at home. The majority of our staff are juggling on-site school with virtual learning, photocopying work for children without devices and home schooling their own children.

Another reason for doing pre-recorded lessons or voice-over presentations is so that you can accommodate your children around your home life and have a degree of flexibility in how your day is structured. Senior staff felt that if devices were limited at home or a family had multiple children, it would be more stressful for parents trying to coordinate everyone being live at the same time. We felt it would be helpful for families.

In my own family on a Friday, one child has a device whilst the other two are doing a non-device based activity (handwriting/PE/arts and crafts or shock-horror, watching some TV!) Normally they would be at school from 8.40-3.15 but there is NO WAY I am going to have them working solidly for that time. We build in time to play, go for a walk/scoot and take a break.

We are currently reviewing our capacity to extend our remote learning, but in the meantime, **please do remember your number one job is being a mummy and daddy and keeping your children safe and happy. Your best is good enough!**

Best wishes



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